

My Styles of Resolving Conflicts Learning Experience 25

([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

Grade Level Range: Middle School - Adult

Attribution/Source:

The inventory was developed by the social psychologist David W. Johnson (*Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness & Self-Actualization*, 3rd Edition, pages 207-211)

To the Teacher:

The purpose of this learning experience is for students to understand their styles of resolving interpersonal conflict, how they use different styles with different people, and the strengths and weaknesses of their styles. Although it can be done as a stand-alone learning experience, it may be best as a follow-up to the Conflicts I Experience Learning Experience ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)), while the conflicts they experienced are still fresh in their minds.

Procedure/Directions:

1. Introduce this learning experience by discussing how misunderstandings, impasses, and conflicts are inevitable in relationships and how it is important to be able to successfully work through these conflicts. If students have recently completed the Conflicts I Experience ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)), How Do I Cope LE ([Self-Management Skills Module](#)), and/or My Styles of Expressing Feelings Learning Experience ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)), have them review them before proceeding.
2. Next, have them think of recent conflicts (over the last two months) they were involved in, even if it was a minor conflict, like someone saying something to them that caused unpleasant feelings.
3. Next, distribute the My Styles of Resolving Conflict (below). Tell them that this inventory will help them understand their styles of conflict resolution and how effective these styles are for them. Ask them to complete the inventory on the first page and then stop and wait until you tell them to proceed to the next page.
4. When they have completed the inventory, note that these are the five primary ways to resolve conflicts.
5. Based on their scores, have them determine their primary and secondary styles of resolving conflicts.
6. Next, review the 4 ways conflict can be resolved and Win/Win Conflict Resolution (below):

Resolution of Conflicts May Result In:

1. You lose, the other person wins
2. You win, the other person loses
3. You both lose
4. You both win

Successful Resolution of Conflicts Result Win/Win:

1. You and the other person are satisfied with the outcome
2. The relationship is stronger and both of you are better able to interact with each other
3. You both like and trust each other more
4. You both are better able to resolve future conflicts with other people

Procedure/Directions (continued):

1. Next, have students read the background information regarding each style. See the Styles of Conflict Resolution Reading ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))
2. At this point, you could have students share what they have learned/relearned about their styles of conflict resolution and what, if anything, they are surprised about. Nonverbal ways to have students share, depending on the level of trust within the class, could be done in several ways:

One nonverbal technique (the Are You Someone Who Technique) would be to have students stand in a circle as you read each style of resolving conflicts and ask students to step forward for 2 seconds if they use that style as their primary style. For example, step forward if you use “avoiding” as your primary style of resolving conflicts. After 2 seconds, ask them to step back if they have not already done so. You could then ask them to step forward if they use “avoiding” as their secondary style of resolving conflicts. For example, step forward if you are someone who uses “avoiding” as your secondary style of resolving conflicts

A second nonverbal way to have students share if they are sitting in a circle so that everyone can see one another would be for you to read each style of conflict resolution and ask students to use their thumbs to indicate their responses (Thumb O Meter Technique). For example, if their primary style of resolving conflicts is “avoiding” they would put their thumbs straight up. Next, you could ask them if their secondary style of resolving conflicts is “avoiding.” They would put their thumbs straight up.

3. After students understand the different styles and their strengths and limitations, have them complete questions 1-4, then the My Styles With Different People chart, and then questions 5-8. Use these questions as a basis for a class discussion.

4. If you are not going to continue with teaching the communication and conflict resolution skills (effective listening, asking genuine inquiry questions, I Statements, and interpersonal conflict resolution skills) you may have them develop a goal to change their style of conflict resolution with 1-2 people they are closest to (see My Goals Log LE ([SES Projects Module](#))).
5. While their styles of conflict resolution are still fresh in their minds, now may be a good time to teach the necessary relationship skills (effective listening, asking genuine inquiry questions, and I Statements ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)), and interpersonal conflict resolution skills ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)) to successfully resolve conflict.

My Styles of Resolving Conflicts

The following questionnaire allows you to become more aware of how you manage conflict. There are no right or wrong answers since each strategy has appropriate uses.

Directions: After reading each of the questions below, decide whether you use this response frequently (4), occasionally (3), rarely (2), or never (1). Then, put the number of your ranking for that question next to the question number in the chart below.

4 = Frequent Response
3 = Occasional Response
2 = Rarely Response
1 = Never Response

How Do I Usually Handle Conflicts?

- 1) Threaten or fight the other person.
- 2) Try to deal with the other person's point of view and my own.
- 3) Look for a middle ground.
- 4) Admit that I am wrong even if I do not believe I am.
- 5) Avoid discussing the conflict
- 6) Firmly pursue my goals.
- 7) Try to find out specifically what we agree on and disagree on to narrow down the conflict.
- 8) Try to reach a compromise.
- 9) Give in.
- 10) Change the subject.
- 11) Whine or complain until I get my way.
- 12) Try to get all concerns out into the open.
- 13) Give in a little and encourage the other person to do the same.
- 14) Pretend to agree.
- 15) Try to turn the conflict into a joke.

A	B	C	D	E
1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
Total As	Total Bs	Total Cs	Total Ds	Total Es

Now add the numbers in each column.

The columns reflect 5 styles of resolving conflict. Listed below are the names of each style.

- A** = Sharks: competing and forcing.
- B** = Owls: collaborating and confronting.
- C** = Foxes: compromising.
- D** = Teddy Bears: accommodating and smoothing.
- E** = Turtles: avoiding and withdrawing.

See the Styles of Conflict Resolution Reading ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)) for the complete descriptions of each style. Please read it before proceeding.

Next, complete the questions on the following pages based on your styles of conflict management.

- 1) What is your primary conflict management style's name and technique (e.g. turtle: avoiding and withdrawing, shark: forcing and competing, etc.) (highest score from page 1)?

- 2) If you think your primary conflict management style is different than the one you listed above, then list the name and technique of what you believe is your primary conflict management style. Otherwise, write NA.

- 3) What is the name and technique of your secondary conflict management style (e.g. turtle: avoiding and withdrawing, shark: forcing and competing, etc.) (second highest score from page 1)?

- 4) If you think your secondary conflict management style is different than the one you listed above, then list the name and technique of what you believe is your secondary conflict management style. Otherwise, write NA.

My Styles With Different People

Most of us use different styles to resolve conflicts with other people. Sometimes, people in various situations require different techniques. For example, you may not be able to talk to your parents like you talk to your best friends. But often we use a limited number of techniques with certain people.

After each person(s) listed below, indicate the style (avoid, compromise, compete, accommodate, or confront) you most frequently use to resolve conflicts with them. If a person does not apply (e.g. you do not have a brother), write NA. If there are people in your life that are not listed, or if you want to assess your style and degree of success with specific people (e.g. a best friend, a friend), do that where it says “**Specific People**” below. **Only complete the first two columns (Styles Currently Use & Degree of Success).** The third column asks for the typical resolution of conflicts with this person when you use that style. For the degree of success, use the following codes:

1. Lose/Lose: You lose, and they lose.
2. Lose/Win: You lose, and they win
3. Win/Lose: You win, and they lose
4. Win/Win: You win, and they win.

Do not complete the 4th column (More Effective Style) at this time.

Relationship	Style Currently Use	Degree of Success	More Effective Style
Mother			
Father			
Sister			
Brother			
Best Friends			
Friends			
Boy/Girl Friend			
Classmates			
Grandparents			
Employer			
List Other Specific People Below:			

Recommendations Regarding My Styles of Conflict Management

Review all your answers above and reread the Styles of Conflict Resolution Reading ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)). All of the following questions must be answered in complete sentences. Neatness counts. Turn the question into a topic sentence. For example, the strengths of my primary style (avoid, compromise, compete, accommodate, or confront) are... Based on your experiences and the strengths and weaknesses of your style, answer the questions on the following pages.

- 5) Discuss how effective your primary conflict management style is for you (its strengths and weaknesses in general and with specific people). The first sentence should name your primary style (avoid, compromise, compete, accommodate, or confront).

Strengths of My Primary Style: What Works Well for Me:

Weaknesses of My Primary Style: What Doesn't Work Well for Me:

- 6) Discuss how effective your secondary conflict management style is for you (its strengths and weaknesses in general and with specific people). The first sentence should name your secondary style (avoid, compromise, compete, accommodate, or confront).

Strengths of My Secondary Style: What Works Well for Me:

Weaknesses of My Secondary Style: What Doesn't Work Well for Me:

Return to the “My Styles With Different People” chart and complete the **More Effective** column. For each person, list the technique you would be better off using to resolve conflicts with that person more effectively (you increase your chances of getting what you want and need and/or you maintain or improve the quality of the relationship). Write the name of the style (avoid, compromise, compete, accommodate, or confront) in the 4th column. If your style with that person is already effective and no other style would be more effective, write **AE** (for **Already Effective**).

7) Discuss how you could be more effective in resolving conflicts with people in general (you increase your chances of getting what you want and need and/or you maintain or improve the quality of the relationship). For example, I would be more effective in preventing and resolving conflicts with people in general if I...

8) Discuss how you could be more effective in your ability to resolve conflicts with the specific people in your life that you are closest to (you increase your chances of getting what you want and need, and/or you maintain or improve the quality of the relationship). Discuss how you could be more effective in dealing with these people. Make sure to identify each person. For example: Dad: I would be more effective in preventing and resolving conflict with my Dad if I... Continue your answers on the back.